For Discussion
from the Communist Party USA

The National Question

by Jarvis Tyner
Executive Vice-Chair, CPUSA

We are living through a very dangerous period. The Bush Administration and most Republicans in Congress are using the events of September 11th to push their reactionary agenda: imperialist agression abroad, racism and austerity at home. We are in the middle of a deeping economic crisis made worse by the terrorist attack on Spetember 11, 2001, the great corporate scandals of 2002, and the right-wing policies of the Bush Administration.

This administration is using McCarthyite and Cointelpro methods to promote witch-hunt-like repression. They want to silence all dissent in the name of fighting terrorism. An important part of this is an acceleration of the Bush administration's racist offensive. That new offensive is directly linked to the push towards war, the terrible state of the economy, and Ashcroft's so-called "Homeland Defense." Attorney General Ashcroft has a long history of opposition to racial justice.

The question of nationality and race has always been important, but because of the present climate it is even more urgent today. The times call for not just discussion, but for discussion that leads to action.

Introduction

Issues of national and racial oppression in our country, which we Marxists call the national question, are not of interest to Black and Brown people alone. They are issues that affect the entire working class, the entire nation and should be of great concern to all people who have the best interests of the nation at heart.

The historic 27th Convention of the Communist Party in Milwaukee last year began a discussion on the nature of the national question in the US today.

In his outstanding report, Comrade Sam Webb pointed out that we had to accept ***". . . the challenge to deepen our theoretical understanding of the national question and to qualitatively upgrade our day-to-day practice of fighting for equality and against racism."***

At a subsequent meeting of the National Board it was proposed that there be a national conference on the national question and the development of a program.

When we say the national question, we mean the total question of nationality, ethnicity and race in our country. What is the status of different racial and national minorities in this nation? Are they equal? Do they live a life of racial and national oppression? In our way of thinking, the solution to the national question means the elimination of all forms of oppression based on race, nationality and ethnicity. It means the achievement of the reality in our nation where all people are equal no matter what their race or nationality.

The national question is a big part of the CPUSA's program. A crucial part of our fight from here to socialism is a solution to the national question.

This paper is by no means definitive or exhaustive. It is an opening to what should be a very important discussion that should lead to a renewed struggle against racism.

I am not sure if all of the data I've collected is complete or up-to-date, but I'm sure it is accurate on the direction of things. It shows a changing and complex picture of race, nationality and ethnicity in our nation today. There is no doubt the national question is having a greater impact on the class struggle and on the nation as a whole.

My hope is that this report will lay the basis for a process of study, discussion and action to help our Party upgrade its work.

The national question is a principled question for the CPUSA. Its impact on the class struggle is strategic. Our slogan "black, brown and white unite" applies to all aspects of our Party's policy. It is a fighting slogan that rings true and moves working people into struggle, a principled slogan that will apply all the way up to socialism and in the building of socialism.

We must not take the national question lightly or routinely. It must have a living presence in every thing we do. We must be a Party whose members are conscious and visibly active in building unity against racism and for equality of all people.

A note of caution: This is a very sensitive area of the Party's work that has a decisive impact on Party unity. We need especially to avoid dogmatic and subjective approaches to this question.

I want to thank the members of the National Board for

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their collective input which strengthened this document. It was invaluable to spend most of a day in discussion on this vital topic with leaders of the Party of all nationalities and races from across the country. I of course take full responsibility for any remaining errors.

Evolution of our Policies

Throughout history, our Party has contributed much to the ideological and theoretical understanding of the national question in our country. We have a long history of building practical movements against racial and national oppression.

Many great leaders of our Party were pioneers in the civil rights movement in our country. The great W. E. B. Dubois was a principal founder of the Niagara Movement, the forerunner of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). William L. Patterson, among many significant achievements, headed the Civil Rights Congress and gave outstanding leadership to the fight to free the Scottsboro youths and many other victims of racist oppression. Leading white Communists contributed much to this struggle in the practical movements and in their writings on the subject. William Z. Foster's book *The Negro People in American History* and the many works on the subject by Herbert Aptheker and Gus Hall remain outstanding contributions to the antiracist cause.

Marxism-Leninism is a living science, not a dogma. It is a method of thought, a guide to action, which gives us the ability to analyze all phenomena objectively and come up with the best possible tactical approaches and policies. Over the years as objective conditions have changed the Party has had the wisdom to make necessary shifts in its policies.

For example, during the 30s, 40s and 50s when the African American people began their mass migration North off the land into a predominantly urban working class existence, it became increasingly clear that the older concept of an "emerging nation within a nation," which involved a solution that meant land and territory, was not correct. Great thinkers like Dr. Dubois, Paul Robeson, Henry Winston, Ben Davis, Claude Lightfoot, Claudia Jones and Dr. James Jackson helped lead our Party to a more correct position.

The African American people are a national minority, they concluded, whose struggle isfor full social, economic and political equality in the context of the overall anti-monopoly fight for democracy and socialism. As a people who are over 90% working class, they constitute a strategic ally ***and*** a vital component part of the U. S. working class. At that point they described that special role as "centrality" of the struggles of the African American people.

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Protesting the war against Iraq

That new position, a more winning approach, moved away from the "nation within a nation" concept, a somewhat mechanical application of Russian experience to the U. S. developed in the 20s and early 30s.

The development of the civil right upsurge of the 60's was very much in line with that change in thinking. That upsurge not only scored great victories against racism but activated and radicalized the masses of African American people, big sections of labor, and broad sections of the American people, including the growing numbers of other racially oppressed minorities. There were various political trends that promoted diverse strategies for liberation. Those trends taht advocated broad inclusive tactics that promoted multiracial unity, that directed their fire at the capitalist ruling class and activated the working class, especially its organized sectors, brought the greatest advances.

Great fighters including Caesar Chavez allied themselves with Martin Luther King Jr. and, despite the conservative leadership of the AFL-CIO, the United Farm Workers was born as a militant union and brought the power of predominantly Mexican American workers to the fore.

During the 80s and 90s there was an even more dramatic shift in US racial demographics. The nation, particularly the working class, became considerably more multinational, especially with the growth of immigration and the Latino population. We spoke of multiracial, multinational unity and brought forth the slogan "Black, Brown and White unite," officially adopted at our 25th convention in 1991.

We must now reexamine the national question in our country objectively, based on the real situation, the new facts and figures. From this knowledge, we need to update our policies to meet the new realities.

Increasingly Multiracial Nation

We live in a nation of 281 million people that includes almost every race and nationality and ethnic group on the planet. The US is perhaps the most multiracial country in the world, especially our working class. I believe this is a beautiful feature of the United States. While the right wing considers this a weakness, it is in fact one of our nation's greatest strengths.

Racial minorities live and work in every region, in every state and in every major city. They are majority working class and generally occupy the lowest paying, most exploitative jobs. Among the national minorities there are large numbers of immigrant workers, the largest groups coming from Mexico, the Caribbean, Central and South America.

These workers are super-exploited, working in the most primitive, unhealthy, non-union conditions. Basic human and labor rights are often denied them. In the case of thousands of undocumented, mainly agricultural workers crossing the border with Mexico, they are subjected to the murderous policies of the INS and the Border Patrol. They are hounded, chased down like criminals. Hundreds have tragically died or been murdered, especially in border areas, for simply trying to unite their families and find a better life.

In addition there are Native American Indians, Eskimo, Aleut, Asian, Pacific Islanders, Arabs, Iranians and other Middle Eastern peoples. We are talking about at least 70 million people out of a U. S. population of 281 million.

African Americans

The largest national racial minority group is African Americans, who make up over 12% of the US population. According to the U. S. Census, African Americans are approaching the 35 million mark. 54% now live in the South. The four states with the largest percentage of African Americans are Mississippi, Louisiana, South Carolina and Georgia. Washington DC also has one of the highest concentrations of African Americans. New York State has the numerically largest Black population in the country, over 3 million.

The African American people play a big role in national politics. Their concentration in big urban centers, high working class composition (over 90%), heavy concentration in the labor movement, and high level of political/social organization including churches and mosques, civil rights organizations and social and fraternal organizations, all make it possible to politically mobilize millions. In national elections, African Americans vote more overwhelmingly against the extreme right than any other group, mainly using the Democratic Party vehicle. In the 2000 Presidential race Black voters represented 10% of those who voted. There are over 9,000 Black elected officials nationally; almost all run as Democrats. Because they vote almost unanimously as a block in most elections, African Americans have a level of influence beyond their actual numbers.

Boeing Machinists demand a better contract

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Mexican Americans

There are approximately 21 million Mexican Americans living in the US. Over 55% live in the West and 31% or 5.6 million live in the South. The state with the largest Mexican American population is California. The largest city is Los Angeles with over 1 million Mexican Americans. The Mexican American population is concentrated in the Southwest but is growing throughout the country. The five states with the largest percentage of Mexican Americans and Hispanics are New Mexico, California, Texas, Arizona and Nevada. Over 180,000 live in New York City. Mexican Americans mainly vote Democratic and have a major impact on national elections. They have emerged as perhaps the most decisive group of voters in California and southwestern states.

There are over 4,000 Mexican Americans elected to public office nationally. Most have been elected as Democrats. The Mexican American people are overwhelmingly working class and are a major force in the trade union movement nationally. There are also many large national, regional, and local mass organizations among the Mexican American people that have a big impact on the U.S. political scene.

Latinos

There are 32 million people that the U. S. Census defines as of Hispanic origin. Their definition includes people of different races and nationalities whose origins are Spanish speaking. We prefer the term Latino.

ILWU Longshoremen picket for improved wages, pensions, and working conditions

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Sixty-six percent (66%) are of Mexican descent, 14 percent are of Central American and South American origin, 9 percent are of Puerto Rican descent, 4 percent are of Cuban origin. The remaining six percent includes other Latinos, e.g. Dominicans, and those of Spanish origin (U. S. Census).

Latinos with all of their racial diversity are the fastest growing part of the U. S. population. The common language and experiences in the U. S. including discrimination based on language and immigration status are forging unity among all Spanish-speaking peoples. There are several large national organizations geared towards representing the interest of Latinos as a group. Republicans are targeting Latinos in an effort to bolster their vote totals and to split nationally oppressed groups from each other. In most elections, a majority of Latinos vote against the right wing.

Puerto Ricans

There are 3.4 million Puerto Ricans in the U. S. The region with the largest Puerto Rican population is the Northeast, where 2 million (66% of the total) reside. There are over 750,000 Puerto Ricans in the South as well. They are present in every region of the country with almost 800,000 living in New York City. Their working class composition is over 90% and they are very active in the trade union movement and also vote solidly against the right, mainly through the Democratic Party vehicle. There are 3.8 million people on the Island of Puerto Rico, which is a U. S. colonial possession. Part of their fight for justice here includes the fight for independence for the Island of Puerto Rico.

Cuban Americans

There are 1.2 million Cubans in the US. About 900,000 live in the South, mainly in the state of Florida. Because a high percentage of Cuban American families originally came to the U. S. in opposition to socialism in their native land, this community tends to be conservative and ultra-right. The leaders of Cuban American organizations are usually ultra-right Republicans. They rule Cuban American communities, especially in Florida, with an iron fist and a history of violence. Many are directly tied to the CIA and FBI. The voices of opposition with in the Cuban American community with each new generation continue to grow, including left voices. I do not know what percentage is working class.

Dominican Americans

There are over 800,000 Dominicans in the U. S. Almost a half a million (495,000) are located in New York State, mainly in the New York City area. They are the second largest Latino group in NYC after Puerto Ricans and are that city's fastest growing ethnic group. Dominicans are overwhelmingly working class with a substantial number actively involved in their unions. Thirty-six percent of Dominicans in the US live in poverty. The left/progressive sectors of the Dominican community are quite active.

Asians Americans, Asians and Pacific Islanders

There are over 11million Asian Americans, Asians and Pacific Islanders in the U. S.

Asian Americans come from many different nations, with different cultures, different histories, different politics. The widely varying conditions in their homelands have a big impact on the consciousness, level of organization, and integration into U. S. society. Another big factor is when these immigrants came to the U. S. and under what conditions. The second generation Japanese Americans who were citizens who faced forced incarceration in internment camps during World War II have a different life experience and political history from Vietnamese who fled with the retreating U. S. armed forces in the mid-1970s. Filipinos whose fathers came to the U. S. in the 1920s to work in the agricultural fields of California have different national issues than South Koreans.

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Demanding a contract for grad student teachers

The national questions faced by Asian Americans are thus complex, varied, and need more attention from our Party. As more recent immigrants from Asia live in this country for longer periods, they increasingly face the racial and national discrimination rife in the U. S., and increasingly struggle against that oppression.

Pacific Islanders also come from countries and lands with widely varying political and economic conditions, from colonies of the U. S. like Guam, to independent nations like the Philippines, Indonesia, Fiji, and others, to hundreds of smaller islands which are still struggling to create and maintain their own national identities. Samoans, Fijians, Australian and New Zealand aboriginals, and many other nationalities all have special features to the national discrimination and racial discrimination they face.

Native Americans, Aleuts, Inuit

There are approximately 2.5 million Native American Indians, Inuit and Aleuts in the U. S.

There are many specific features of the national struggles of Native American Indians which are unique (as well as varying from tribe to tribe). Formal political issues of sovereignty and treaty rights, as well as issues of Bureau of Indian Affairs mismanagement of tribal funds over many decades, give a different character to these struggles. Fishing rights, treaty rights, land rights, health care and education (and mistreatment by the Federal Government of Indian health care and education), as well as tribal government issues, all impact on the organization and forms of struggle engaged in by Native Americans.

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John Herriman, the first Native American astronaut

Some tribes are now playing a more active, vigorous role in the political process, helping to defeat anti-Indian Congresspeople, like Senator Slade Gorton from Washington State in 2000. The growing political clout of some tribes is contrasted with the most vicious effects of racism on the living conditions, education, employment, health, and survival of many Native Americans, who on some reservations are subjected to the worst possible living conditions, highest infant mortality rates, highest rates of disease and death, and highest unemployment of any nationality. These conditions have not been alleviated by the growth of gambling casinos on many reservations.

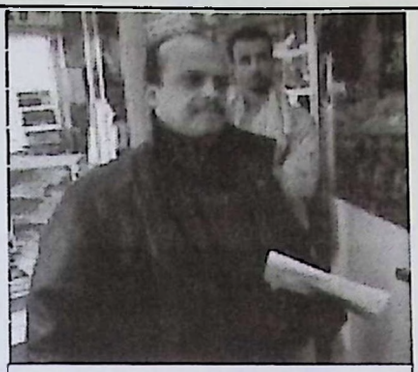
The genocide directed at Native Americans during most of the history of the U. S. must be recognized and acknowledged, mainly by honoring treaties and tribal sovereignty, by reparations programs and affirmative action for tribes, reservations, and for urban Indians. The role of working class Native Americans in some specific industries and areas of the country should be noted, as well as the long history of struggle by Native Americans for survival and for basic human rights.

Hawaiian Americans

The ancestors of Hawaiian Americans were citizens of an independent country forcibly occupied by the U. S. government, which deposed the existing government and annexed the country of Hawaii. As well, many Asians came to Hawaii, brought to work in the pineapple fields. Hawaii today is an amalgam of Native Hawaiians, Filipinos, Japanese, Chinese, Pacific Islanders, and European Americans. This extremely multiracial society faces national discrimination and the particularities of an occupied country facing national discrimination. Like Puerto Ricans, the struggle against the domination of their culture and government by an occupying power gives even more importance to the national question in Hawaiian struggles.

Arab Americans

There are currently about 3 million Americans with Arab heritage in the US. Forty-seven percent are Lebanese; 15% Syrian, 9% Egyptian; 6% Palestine and 3% Iraqi.



Kalid Kaid after his gas station was raided by federal agents

Recently three Arab American young doctors were stopped on an interstate highway and held for hours as "suspected terrorists" on the word of one person who, following Ashcroft's lead to spy on people, eavesdropped on them in a Shoney's Restaurant. The highway was closed for hours. The national media spread racist hysteria. The doctors, who were totally innocent, were in effect fired from their new jobs as a result, and not allowed to continue their medical studies at that hospital. In that atmosphere, they could have suffered great physical harm.

Now we have Lackawanna NY and the 5 Yemeni youths, accused of having ties to Al Qaeda. Again, hysterical headlines all across the country for days. There is an open assumption that they are guilty in all the news stories. The media are promoting anti-Arab racist hysteria.

Over a thousand Arabs and Arab Americans are in jail with no charges against them. People are being fired, beaten up and killed. Ashcroft, whose racism is well known, is leading this anti-Arab racist offensive, in order to scare the American people into accepting their program of war, racism and repression. This is clearly a massive diversion from growing problems of poverty, homelessness, unemployment and hunger. This is very dangerous.

This policy is aimed not just at Arabs but people who look like Arabs (which includes many Latinos and African Americans). It is also anti-Muslim, and the majority of Muslims in the US are African American.

Majority Minority

By the year 2005, the Latino population is projected to reach over 38.1 million. African Americans are projected to reach over 37.6 million. Asian and Pacific Islanders will reach 13.2 million and American Indians, Eskimos and Aleuts will reach over 2.6 million.

Sometime around 2060, the U. S. will become a majority non-white nation. How will this country survive if the policies of the last two decades, especially the Reagan and Bush policies, continue, with mass imprisonment, poverty wages, racial polarization and drastic cutbacks in social services? How will our country survive when larger and larger numbers, numbers eventually reaching a majority of its people, are super-exploited, racially oppressed and impoverished? This is another crucial reason why socialism is so necessary.

If U. S. capitalism doesn't change its policies on race, this country is headed for a disaster.

This is a real challenge to American capitalism. It is also a challenge to the multiracial U. S. working class, the labor movement and all progressive forces, including our Party. ***We must not let the ruling class drown this country in racism and violence! History shows that that is what they will do if they can get away with it.***

The notion being pushed by the ultra right that the civil rights movement is passe and has become an obstacle to racial progress must be soundly rejected. The opposite is the case. Strong laws against discrimination with affirmative action and serious enforcement are urgently needed today.

We need the civil rights movement now more than ever. With the non-white portion of the population growing larger every day racism becomes an ever greater obstacle to democracy for all. It becomes more urgent to expand and initiate where needed a stronger broad multiracial movement to end all forms of racist oppression in our society. The Communist PArty USA has an important role to play here.

Conditions of Life of the 70 million

In an article in *Political Affairs* (February 2002), sociologist David Eisenhower described the conditions of life of non-white people in the U. S. as follows:

- In 2000 the rate of poverty for African Americans was 21.1% and 21.2% for Hispanics (Census Bureau)
- Black teen unemployment was 32.2 percent in November 2001.
- In October 2001 the unemployment rate of African Americans was officially 9.7%.
- In 1998 Blacks and Hispanics were two and a half times more likely to fall into the category of "working poor."
- In 1998 Black men earned 71 cents for every dollar earned by white men while Black male college graduates earned 72 cents for every dollar earned by comparable white males.

He goes on to say that with the onset of recession and the return of budget deficits, the effects on the working poor (disproportionately people of color) will be devastating, particularly with the elimination of welfare and the government safety net. Since then, as he predicted, the economic and social conditions of life have indeed worsened.

These economic numbers are not the whole story. What about racial justice?

The Republicans' Racist Program

Earlier I mentioned the acceleration of the Bush racist offensive as part of their push for war, to cover up the terrible effects of the economic downturn and the corporate scandals and to silence all opposition. While the Democrats have not been innocent, the Republican Party is the most aggressive and openly racist in their policies. In the wake of Sept. 11th, they are using racist hysteria to terrorize people into accepting war and repression. This is an intensification of the Republican/corporate racist offensive.

Julian Bond described the situation well when he recently said, "***We must understand that when wars are fought to save democracy, the first casualty is usually democracy itself.***"

In this atmosphere, freedom is what truly is under fire. W. E. B. DuBois noted that whenever there are U. S. wars of

aggression abroad it always leads to an increase in racism and reaction here at home.

Before 9/11 the flames of racism were already out of control as a result of the Bush policies.

He stole the election by stealing the votes of Black and Latino voters. 95% of the people whose names were purged from the Florida rolls were not felons. Over half of those names were Black and non-Cuban Latinos. And they're still cheating and stealing in Florida. Just ask Janet Reno.

We must mention the defeat of Cynthia McKinney and Earl Hilliard. The Republicans, in alliance with right-wing Zionists and conservative African American forces, did this.

There is the continued use of Vieques for bombing practice by the U. S. military, despite the overwhelming objection from the people of Puerto Rico. There is the death penalty, which is disproportionately given to non-whites, especially African Americans.There is the long struggle for justice for Mumia and Leonard Peltier, and all the other political prisoners.

There is a genocidal edge to these policies, which transcends the two parties and reflect the policies of the whole ruling class.

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Trent Lott, poster boy for Republican racism

Certainly the so-called welfare reform which was the virtual elimination of welfare for millions of poor families falls in that category. Millions of children of color are being abused and radically deprived of the means of survival.

There are brutal policies towards immigrants at the border and on the job. While workplace deaths have declined among other groups, among Hispanics they have gone up 53% since 1992! Recently 14 migrant forestry workers from Guatemala and Honduras were killed in a remote area of Maine when their crowded van swerved off a bridge and sank in a river 60 miles from nowhere. There was no one aroundto help them. Everyone died but one worker. Working conditions for immigrant and migrant workers are appalling all over the country. This is why these workers are among the most militant advocates of trade unions.

Economic Racism: By-product of Globalization

Nearly half of the world's population lives on less than $2 a day. Worldwide, over 40,000 die every day from preventable diseases due to lack of access to necessary medicines. These and other horrible conditions of life are rooted in the worldwide system of global capitalism. The only way to truly alleviate these horrendous conditions is by struggling against global capitalism.

The image of sneakers, made by a child in a factory in Asia or Africa who receives a few cents a day, being sold to low income families for $60-$70 is the reality of global capitalism.

The nearly half of the world's population living on so little and dying for lack of medicines are primarily non-white people. Global capitalist profits thrive on the super-exploitation and suffering of people of color in a special way. The policies of global capitalism are inherently racist. Racism plays a critical role in rationalizing the exploitation and oppression that have brought about mass poverty and deprivation to the peoples of color all over the world. The conditions they suffer from could not exist without racism. Racism intensifies class exploitation. Imperialist wars are not possible without the use of racism to cover up and rationalize heinous war crimes. You cannot fight for peace in the world and against global capitalism without fighting racism.

Education Not Incarceration

From 1980 to now the US prison population has quadrupled. Of the 2 million people in prison, 1 million are African American males. 300,000 are Latino.

For every 100,000 white men in the population, there are 482 in prison. For every 100,000 Black men in the population, there are ***4,560*** in prison. Black men's incarceration rate is 9.6 times the rate for white men. Contrary to the usual right-wing slander, only 26% of Black men in prison have been convicted of violent crimes. Most are in prison because they were convicted for drug offenses.

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Jesse Jackson hugs former death row inmante Anthony Porter, who served 18 years in prison and was 50 hours from execution when he was exonerated.

28.5% of all Black men (almost 1 out of 3) will be confined to prison at least once in their lives. In 1980, there were 3 times more Black men enrolled in college then in prison. In the year 2000 there were about 200,000 more African American males in prison then in institutes of higher learning.

Scott Marshall, CPUSA National Labor Secretary, reports that they are now building prisons with production facilities built in. Our youth are being moved from bad schools and inadequate education to unemployment, poverty, drugs and prison and then to indentured servitude.

As a result of these policies, 4.5 million people have lost the right to vote and are suffering what is called "civic death." Over half of that group, 2.5 million, are African American. This is a brutal way to cut down on the anti-right-wing vote.

This is the effect of 22 years of an intensive right-wing corporate-racist offensive. It's literally killing people and de-

stroying their democratic right to function in society.

Then there is the military "option." With decades of war on the ruling class drawing board what does that mean for youth of color forced into the military?

This is the effect of systemic racism, racism built into the economy (what Gus Hall called economic racism). It is racism that is built into the judiciary, courts, police and prisons. It is racism built into the INS, the FBI and the CIA. It is racism that is underfunding and trying to privatize public schools when they are predominantly Black and Latino, like school funding in NY State. A state judge ruled that per capita the public school children in the New York City were being shortchanged by billions of dollars when compared to suburban white public schools. That decision was overthrown on appeal. The court agreed with Governor Pataki's lawyers who argued that the state was only obligated to provide an eighth-grade education, therefore the funding was not discriminatory. What do you call this but racism? Who believes that an 8th grade education is all you need in this economy?

Gene Bibbins greets his lawyer after release from prison. He served 16 years of a life sentence for rape, and was only freed after two DNA tests showed he was innocent.

Indifference to crises in Africa, Asia and Latin America are a hallmark of the current Bush administration and the U. S. right wing in general. The 2 billion people on this planet who live on less then $2.00 a day live almost exclusively in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

AIDS in Africa is at the level of a pandemic. Twenty-nine million are infected now, with 3 to 4 million dying every year because only 30,000 have access to the antiretroviral drugs essential to prolong lives. Literally tens of millions will die if something is not done. The drugs to save Africa and Asia are under the control of giant privately-owned U. S. and other capitalist countries' transnational corporations, who only see their profits. These are multibillion-dollar corporations in countries with huge government budgets. The lives of millions of innocent people are in their hands but they will not give them the drugs. This is putting profits before people with a vengence. Because the crisis is in Africa and Southeast Asia, racism plays a major role in why these governments and big drug companies think they can get away with their policies, which shows calculated indifference at best, complicity in genocide at worst.

System of Oppression

It is our view that racial and national oppression historically and presently cannot be understood as simply a matter of individual prejudice. Racism has always been a system of oppression. In the grand sweep of our nation's history, racism and national oppression have played and continue to play enormous roles in the basic development and day-to-day functioning of U. S. capitalism.

In our capitalist system, class exploitation and national oppression are inseparably linked and impact all our lives. They affect our everyday lives at the workplace, in the communities where we live, in the court system, at the supermarket and at the schoolhouse. They are a living factor in the life, the culture, and the psychological make up of the American people.

National oppression, class oppression and the inequality of women are also connected. With women making up half of the work force and a higher percentage of women of color in the work force, the fight for women's equality has a big impact on the class and national struggles in our country.

Systemic racism, rooted in slavery, genocide and inequality, affected by gender, impacts where you live, how you live and how long you live. It affects the quality of your life and how police, the courts and the state treat you. It affects your relationship with government in general. Due to environmental racism, it affects the very quality of the air you breath.

If you are a non-white working person you are going to experience racial oppression in America. You are going to face inequality and discrimination directly and personally, and even more often as part of a group, a community or a class of people. Racism will affect your life from the time you are born to the time you die.

Racial and national oppression is a basic part of capitalist relations of production in the U. S. Because it is rooted in the capitalist system, it is an holistic system of oppression. Because it is rooted in capitalist exploitation of the working class, it is a basic part of the ideological arsenal of the ruling class.

The ideology of racism is not just an abstract idea but also an ideological rationale and enforcer of the most brutal polices of our government and corporate America.

It is used to rationalize indifference to genocide, poverty, hunger, violence, and war.

It is used to divide and defeat the working class.

Racism has always played a major role in the bloodiest and most violent periods in our nation's history.

There can be no peaceful coexistence with the ideology of racism. Racism exploits, oppresses and kills!

Racism is closely linked to the exploitation of the working class. Because racism and national oppression have such a powerful presence in the ideological and day to day life of our nation, they also have an impact and momentum of their own. This momentum moves **beyond the parameters of the class struggle.**

Racism infects the working class as well, even though it is against workers' basic interests. That is why there must be a consistent struggle against racism. When racism infects the working class body politic the results are deadly for the class struggle.

Our Party has a long-term record of commitment to building a many-sided, united struggle against racism wherever it

rears its ugly head. Gus Hall called racism, "our nation's most dangerous pollutant." For the working class and progressive forces, racism is a tool of the ruling class to divide and conquer, to intensify exploitation and therefore increase profits. It is a way of reaping super-profits from the hard labor of racially oppressed workers and holding down the wages of all workers.

This is our starting point.

Nationalism

Nationalism coming from oppressed minorities is largely defensive, a reaction to racist oppression. Historically, the more that petty bourgeois/middle-class elements dominated movements among the nationally oppressed, the greater the tendency towards nationalism. Nationalism is basically a bourgeois ideology.

But there are left nationalists, many of whom are working class, who reject right-wing, narrow nationalism and agree with a level of multinational unity. We work with such forces. Our experience working with left nationalists among people of color, in the Black Radical Congress and other antiracist organizations, has been mainly positive. Our role is to find ways to elevate everybody's understanding of the class source and solution to racial oppression.

Writing in the early 1970s about narrow Black Nationalism, Henry Winston, National Chairman of the CPUSA from 1961 to his death in the late 1980s, described the problem thus: ***"While the ruling class promotes racist seperation for whites, the black skin strategists are busy working the other side of the street by advocating seperatism for Black people."*** (*Strategy for a Black Agenda,* 1973, International Publishers)

Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism is related to racism; the real sources of anti-Semitism are largely the same as racism. This paper are concentrates on racism as directed against non-white racial minorities.

However, I want to raise one idea related to the fight for unity. The level of Black-Jewish unity in many key areas of the country has a big impact on multiracial unity and also on left-center unity. You cannot fight racism with anti-Semitism and you cannot fight anti-Semitism with racism. It is a "lose-lose" proposition all around.

What happened to Cynthia McKinney and Earl Hilliard and is happening right now to the Palestinians feeds the tendencies toward anti-Semitism among the vicitims of racism. But anti-Semitism should be rejected. It is the ideology of racism. We must see that the policies of the right-wing Zionists and the Israeli ruling class are not identical with nor in the interest of Jewish masses.

History

We hold this discussion on the national question to deepen our understanding so that we can contribute more to the struggle for racial justice. Our Party continues to work to deepen our understanding and practical work to bring an end to national oppression not just for tactical reasons but also because **racism is morally wrong!**

Racial and national oppression has been a basic part of our nation since it was founded. The revolutionary war successfully broke the colonial chains of the British crown. It was a noble and revolutionary part of our history as a nation. But there was nothing noble or democratic about genocide against Native American Indians or the forced enslavement of African labor. There was nothing praiseworthy when they forcibly annexed territory from the Republic of Mexico. (Ironically, today Mexicans are prevented from entering the U. S. through territory that was taken from Mexico in the first place.)

There was nothing noble about killing off thousands of Indians and super-exploiting Asian indentured labor to build the railroads westward.

Those who prefer to talk only about the noble ideals and hard work of the "founding fathers," abstracted from slavery and national oppression, are not telling the whole truth. This nation could not have been founded and developed without the extraordinary suffering, blood, sweat, tears, and sacrifices of people of color and the hard labor and exploitation of common working women and men. The real historic record is clear. It is from this truth that the demand for reparations is being raised.

Reparations

The demand for reparations for African American people is a positive democratic demand. It is a just demand in the first place. It is also a way of showing the real origins, nature, and the interrelationships of racism and U. S. capitalism. It helps people understand the capitalist roots of racist oppression in the U. S. If presented in that context, it can help increase antiracism and anticapitalism among all people. If it is resolved in that context, it will benefit all the oppressed and exploited, and advance democracy for all working people.

Reparations must be more than a set amount of money.

Other groups have gotten reparations: the Jewish people for the Nazi Holocaust and Japanese Americans for their concentration camp internment by the U. S. government during World War II.

Are not the enslavement of Africans, the genocide against the Indians, is taking of territory from Mexicans, the indentured servitude of Asian labor, not worthy of compensation? Is not the annexation of Puerto Rico and the Hawaiian Islands and all the monumental acts of cruelty and oppression mentioned above, that the capitalist class profited from, are they not worthy of some form of compensation also? Indeed they are. Our history as a nation is full of acts of genocide, full of many holocausts. Enormous wealth was accumulated because of these tragedies.

Not only African Americans should be eligible for forms of compensation, so should all the other groups who have been wronged by this system.

I don't think a check could ever suffice for the pain and suffering so many have gone through. You can't come up with an amount to compensate for so much oppression and super-exploitation. Reparations have to be in the form of jobs, health care, education and housing. They have to be in the

form of action that works to affirmatively eliminate inequality and poverty, to dismantle the system of racist oppression. I do not believe you can have reparations without affirmative action.

If all the racially oppressed receive a check and the systemic racism remains intact, we will face the same oppression. When the check is gone, what then?

The positive point that demands for reparations make is that the reason non-whites are in the situation they are in today is not due to any failure to "work hard" or to "lack of intelligence" or "tendency towards criminal behavior," ad nauseum or any other of the right-wing rationales. What we are dealing with is not the failure of people of color in this nation, it's the failure of this capitalist system.

The Great Failure of U. S. Capitalism

Since the founding of this nation 226 years ago, one of the greatest failures of U. S. capitalism is the continued existence of a brutal system of racial and national oppression. Two and a quarter centuries of existence are plenty of time for U. S. capitalism to have solved the national question. Yet this capitalist class has shown itself unwilling and/or unable to do so.

When the first European settlers arrived here, there are many stories of how indigenous Indians greeted them in peace, as friends, and taught them to survive and thrive in this harsh "new world." The Indians largely lived a communal-tribal existence. They had societies that were more cooperative than competitive. Helping strangers in need was a natural thing for the Indians. This was a big rich country with room enough for everybody to live happy, prosperous and peaceful lives.

If King George and his colonialists had held the same outlook as the indigenous peoples, the development of this nation would not have been as tragic and bloody as it was. We would not have had the Indian wars, slave trade and slavery; the Civil War and the Spanish American War could perhaps have been avoided. The horrors of germ warfare against the Indians and the lynchings of Africans could perhaps have been avoided.

We could have much sooner had a prosperous nation that was a beautiful mosaic of people of all colors, races and nationalities living peacefully together in racial equality and harmony.

The Indians were at a different stage of development before the brutality and greed of the era of capitalism. The potential for a more peaceful history didn't happen, mainly because the colonialists had a different idea: ***not*** cooperation and racial harmony ***but*** primitive accumulation of wealth and land, rationalized by extreme racism and backwardness. The Indian nations were in the way, so they were systematically exterminated until they were reduced to small controllable numbers.

The colonial power wanted to cultivate this rich fertile soil and get rich from the sale of crops in demand all over the world. They needed cheap labor. To do this, indentured convict labor was forcibly brought here from Europe. But that was not enough. Thousands of Africans were kidnapped and forced to travel thousands of mile in the most despicable conditions on slave ships, the middle passage where hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, died. They arrived in this strange land in chains and were forced to work in the most brutal system of chattel slavery humankind has known. They were sold like cattle. Their human birthright was forcibly taken away and their cultures repressed. They were classified as less than human and forced to suffer the most unspeakable horrors, put in chains and enslaved for life.

Without racism and national chauvinism, this brutal oppression could not have been rationalized. Because Indians, Africans and Mexicans were considered savages, uncivilized and inferior people without culture, unable to think abstractly and therefore incapable of organizing a modern civil society, all the concepts of freedom and democracy did not apply to them. That's why we were held back.

Because they were considered less then human beings, they were not included in the words, **"We the People"** by the founding fathers. All the beautiful words of freedom and independence inscribed on parchment did not apply to people of color who, for most of this Republic's existence, had to survive an oppressive, unjust, terrorized existence of racial and national oppression. And it was all legal. That's why we were held back.

In fact, the words on the parchments had to be made a reality for ***most*** Americans through struggle, including full sufferage for non-property owning white males and for women, as well as African Americans. The greatest achievements in our democracy throughout our history were the results of heroic struggles of the people, the oppressed and

Communist Party/Young Communist League contingent in anti-war demonstration, April 20, 2002 in Washington D.C.

exploited in the first place. The people fought for the realization and equal application of those noble words of freedom to their lives; that really advanced this nation. And that tradition continues today.

Black, Brown and White Unity—the Way to End Racial Oppression

Capitalists will never end racism on their own. It is in their economic self-interest. For the working class as a whole, racism holds back their struggle.

To end racial and national oppression will take a mighty and united struggle. It will take the full power of a united struggle of the multiracial working class to win this fight.

We must build unity and reject any notions of race war or of Black or Brown vs. White or Brown vs. Black or Black and Brown vs. White and Asian. These are "no-win" strategies that set back the class as a whole.

Lenin, speaking of Russian experience on this question, is very helpful. He said, ***"The policy of oppressing nationalities is one of dividing nations. At the same time it is a policy of systematic corruption of people's minds. ...to poison the minds of the ignorant and downtrodden masses."***

He goes on to say, ***"But the working class needs unity, not division. It has no more bitter enemy than the savage prejudices and superstitions which it enemies sow. The oppression of 'subject people' is a double-edged weapon. It cuts both ways—against the subject peoples' and against the Russian people. That is why the working class must protest most strongly against national oppression in any shape and form.*** *(V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Moscow; Progress Publishers, 1962. Vol. 20 pp. 327-238.)*

This was written 90 years ago, but it is a clear refutation of racism and incorrect notions like "white skin privilege" and other classless approaches to winning whites to the fight against racism and national chauvinism. Racism cannot be defeated if it is thought to be to the advantage of white workers. History is full of outstanding examples of real progress for the class as a whole only when it understood and acted against racism period.

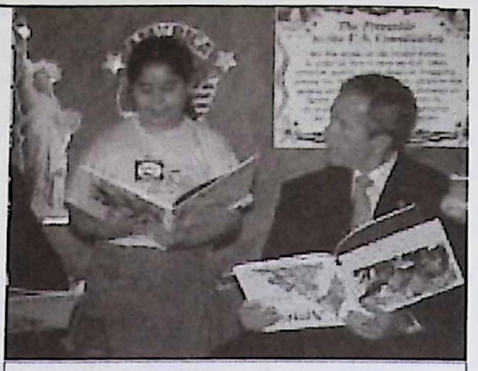
Karl Marx put it well when he said, "labor in the white skin cannot be free a long as labor in the black skin is branded."

Our history is full of examples of advances when there was unity, and setbacks in the absence of unity.

Lessons from Recent Elections

In a recent election in Los Angeles (2001) we suffered a setback when Mexican American and African American voters were divided. Antonio Villaraigosa, labor leader and progressive, could have become mayor if there had been more unity.

In New York State, Pataki was re-elected by splitting the labor movement and Black and Latino voters. His success is a victory for Bush and the Republicans, a defeat for the progressive forces. The voters of New York State missed an opportunity to land a huge blow against racism by electing the first African American governor of the largest state. It was a big setback for New York State labor as a whole.



George W. Bush, the unelected President, gets yet another thing upside down

In Texas there was a chance of electing an African American to the U. S. Senate and Mexican American to the Governorship. The election of this Black and Brown team would have been a real blow to George W. Bush in his home state. They both were Democrats and would have represented a big step away from the ultra-right rule of Phil Graham and the Bush Republicans. The resources and unity were not there to win those struggles. These defeats do not in any way prove that racism can't be defeated or that Blacks and Latinos cannot be elected to higher offices. With unity it is possible to break the racial and gender barriers up to and including electing non-whites and women to the highest offices in the land.

Perspective on the National Question

In our country the national question is a complex of issues. There will be different streams in different national struggles. Different national groups will have their own specific demands and tactics. It is not enough to make general calls for unity. The big challenge is to find ways to build unity while taking into account the correct demands of all racially oppressed groups.

What Sam Webb, CPUSA National Chairman, said in his report to our27th Convention in 2001 will be helpful in our discussion.

In arguing why we had the slogan "Black and white unite and fight," he pointed out the thinking behind that slogan. He said, ***"It identified the African American people as the main strategic partner of the working class. The logic of this position correctly rested on the role of slavery in the historic evolution of our country, the overwhelming working–class make up of the African American people, their location in the strategic sectors of the economy, and finally, the interrelationship of the African American freedom movement with the general class and democratic struggles in our country."***

He went on to point out that more recently we have adjusted our slogan to Black, Brown and white unity and multiracial, multinational unity in order to ***"more accurately capture the changing demographic profile of our working class and people. This adjustment was never intended to diminish the strategic importance of the struggle for African American equality and against racism, although inadvert-***

ently it may have done so."

He added that Black, Brown and white unity indicates the commonality of the national, racial and class struggles. It is a *"strategic requirement for victories on every front of struggle and at every stage of struggle. There is nothing tactical about the fight for Black, Brown and white unity and against racism,"* the report says. *"They are fundamental principles."*

Summing up, Comrade Webb says, *"Thus the concept of multiracial, multinational unity was a necessary and correct strategic adjustment on our part. But perhaps in doing so, we lost sight of the specific features and role of each of the nationality questions. This was a mistake. On the ground, on the terrain of struggle especially, it is imperative that we appreciate the specific features of each nationality question and its interrelationship with other oppressed nationalities and the working class movement."*

"Without this," he concludes, *"We will find it difficult to deepen our role in the fight for Black-Brown unity, multiracial, multinational working class unity, and all-peoples unity. Without that we will find it difficult to strengthen the labor-African American alliance, the labor-Mexican American alliance, and the labor-nationally oppressed people's alliance generally—all of which constitute the foundation of all-people's unity."*

I think in the course of this discussion we need to study and apply these words and find the way to greater unity in our ranks and in the movement.

But we Communists must also help find overall demands that will unite the whole struggle and move it in a working class direction. Our job is to take the unique features of each struggle and find the way to build Black, Brown and white unity under any and all circumstances.

We have to do something else too. We have to build our party among the racially and nationally oppressed working people like never before!

We have a triple concentration policy that must be elevated and implemented as part of this effort as well. Our goal should be to hold the discussion in every leading body, every district and club.

We need a comprehensive program for racial justice. The goal of such a program should be to end all forms of discrimination in all aspects of the nation's life—in housing, jobs, education, heath care, environment, retirement, etc. We need a program that moves towards full equality of all races and nationalities in every area of U. S. life: economic, social, and political.

What We Believe

Being born non-white should not mean having to face a lifetime of racial oppression. Being born non-white and working class in our country means you are sentenced to a lifetime of systemic racism. The intensity may vary depending on one's class origin and station in life, but the overwhelming majority of people of color are forced to live lives of second-class citizenship, of super-exploitation and racial discrimination, lifetimes of living with racist indignities, the threat of racist violence, of expecting less of society and getting worse.

Being born non-white and working class is not a crime. But under U. S. capitalism, it usually means you are sentenced to a lifetime of systemic racial oppression. To treat people in this fashion is a crime against all humanity. It is not only possible to bring an end to racial oppression and inequality in our country, it is a dire necessity.

There are ground zeros all over the country. The state of many of our communities, schools, recreational facilities, and heath care facilities are literally disaster areas. These communities of non-white peoples have been destroyed by capitalist greed and neglect and need to be completely rebuilt and made into livable, attractive, economically vibrant and safe communities. It's time to stop tearing down and gentrifying and start to build up and beautify.

We need a comprehensive federal program (on the scale of the Marshall Plan) to rebuild racially oppressed communities, both urban and rural, throughout the nation.

Equality and Socailism

Socialism, as Lenin diligently pointed out numerous times and in a variety of ways, is not possible without a thoroughgoing, many-sided, consistent struggle for real democracy.

Socialism is an historic necessity if humanity is to reach the stage of real democracy.

In our experience as a nation nothing shows the validity of that truth better than the struggle for an end to national oppression.

We have to visualize equality and socialism. We are in a unique position to build a most unique socialism. Our country already has the material basis for socialism—a socialism that could help solve most of the world's problems. It will be a wonderful socialism indeed. This multiracial, multinational working class of ours in all its magnificent diversity and commonality, in unison and harmony, has the possibility of establishing a new socialist society without systemic racism, with freedom, justice and equality for all. We can win this battle. Racism can be defeated. That is our mission, comrades.

End Racism, End Discrimination
End National Oppression

End All Forms of Discrimination

A Comprehensive Program to Close the Gap of Racial Inequality in All Areas of National Life

1. Massive Job Creation with affirmative action

- Rebuild racially oppressed communities
- Close the housing gap
- End homelessness; livable affordable housing for all.
- New schools built on the basis of 24 students a classroom
- Quality Day care for all families in need of it
- Primary care Health facilities; including drug prevention and rehab facilities with specialties in cardio-vascular and AIDS prevention and treatment
- Parks and recreation facilities
- Environmentally clean and safe

2. Full Employment for All with Affirmative Action—Jobs or Income Now.

- Close the jobs gap
- A Working Families Relief Act

3. Health Care is a Right—Close the life span gap.

- Establish free U. S. National Health Service with affirmative action
- Comprehensive single-payer plan

4. To pay for this program:

- Repeal the Bush tax cut
- Raise Capital Gains Tax on the rich
- No war against Iraq (save $200 million)
- No Star Wars
- Cut military budget By 50%

5. Social Justice and Democratic Rights— Education not Incarceration.

- Repeal the Omnibus Crime Bill, and review all cases of those imprisoned under that act.
- Repeal the U. S. Patriot Act
- Repeal the racist death penalty
- No Department of Homeland Security
- Vigorously enforce all laws against discrimination
- Vigorously enforce all laws against hate speech and racist violence
- End racial profiling and police brutality
- Civilian control of all police departments
- Free Mumia Abu Jamal, Leonard Peltier and all political prisoners

6. Reparations

- Reparations through affirmative action and social programs for all victims of oppression

Communist Party USA

235 West 23rd Street
NY, NY 10011
www.cpusa.org 212-989-4994 cpusa@cpusa.org